

**HANOVER COUNTY  
BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
MINUTES  
July 22, 2014**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Hutto, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

The following members were present: Sheila Crossen-Powell, Sue Dibble, David Hobbs, Larry Huber, Lynn H. Saunders, Michael Shannon, Sr. and G. E. "Ed" Via. Also in attendance: Jim Taylor, Deputy County Administrator; Dennis Walter, Senior Assistant County Attorney; Tamara Temoney, Assistant Director; Jacque Althizer, Budget Management Analyst Senior; Ginny Ferguson, Quality Assurance Coordinator; Alonda Gregory, Benefit Programs Supervisor; Christine Tillman, Family Services Specialist Supervisor-CPS; Chynita Ball, Benefit Programs Specialist I; Beth Gilmore, Family Services Specialist III; DeSeana Sutton, CPS Worker; Cindy Huang, Richmond Times-Dispatch and Robin Riley, Administrative Assistant.

**II. ORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD**

Mr. Walter said that the Board is required to determine the positions of Chair and Vice Chair each year. Members are eligible to serve two consecutive terms. Ms. Hutto opened the floor for nominations.

**A. Election of Chairman**

Mr. Huber nominated Ms. Hutto for a second term as Chair. Rev. Shannon seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

**B. Election of Vice Chair**

Ms. Dibble nominated Mr. Barnette for a second term as Vice Chair. Rev. Shannon seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

**C. Adoption of Meeting Schedule**

*Summary:* The Board will need to decide how often and when it will meet during the upcoming 12 months. The Board is required to meet at least once every other month. A proposed meeting schedule has been distributed for the Board's consideration. *Action Needed:* Motion to approve the Board's meeting schedule from July 2014 through June 2015.

Rev. Shannon moved to adopt the meeting schedule as presented. Mr. Huber seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

**III. CITIZENS' COMMENT PERIOD**

There were no comments.

#### **IV. INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF**

Ms. Gregory introduced Ms. Ball, Benefit Programs Specialist, who began employment with HDSS on 7/1/14. Ms. Ball was formerly a BPS worker in Chesterfield County.

Ms. Tillman introduced Ms. Gilmore, Family Services Specialist, a returning HDSS employee who was with Henrico County for almost seven years. Ms. Tillman said that one of the new workers, Ms. Sutton, was in court this afternoon and if possible, would be introduced later in this meeting.

(4:05 p.m.) Ms. Tillman introduced Ms. Sutton, Child Protective Services Worker, who has eleven years of experience. Ms. Sutton was formerly with Chesterfield County.

Ms. Hutto welcomed the new employees.

#### **V. APPROVAL OF MAY 27, 2014 BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Mr. Huber moved to approve the May 27, 2014 Board Meeting Minutes. Rev. Shannon seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

#### **VI. PRESENTATION: "EVERY WOMAN'S LIFE" - LEIGH SIMPSON, VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - *canceled***

Flyers and brochures were distributed to the Board members. Dr. Crossen-Powell said that Ms. Simpson had to cancel due to attending an earlier than expected orientation for the "Every Woman's Life" program. Four clients have already scheduled appointments. Dr. Franck, District Director, plans to grow the program as quickly as possible. This presentation will be rescheduled for another Board meeting. Mr. Taylor said that Hanover is part of the Chickahominy Health District which encompasses the counties of Charles City, Goochland, Hanover and New Kent. Mr. Taylor inquired about the insurance requirements. Rev. Shannon commented that clients may have insurance under the Affordable Health Care Act, but it may not cover some of these procedures.

#### **VII. EDUCATION AND FOSTER CARE: VICTORIA HUTTO**

Ms. Hutto is working on a post-Master's certificate to obtain the administrative endorsement for her license. The first course is "Communication in Leadership" taught by Dr. Lane, Superintendent of Goochland County Schools. The class was given this assignment because leaders need to be able to speak in front of people on a subject they feel strongly about. Ms. Hutto presented information on "Recognizing Educational Issues for Foster Care Children". Teachers may not be aware of the issues faced by children who are in foster care or a group home setting. Ms. Hutto cited an example of one of her former students who resided in a group home. The student said there was a lack of resources in the home and no quiet environment provided for studying. Many teachers do not realize the factors contributing to some students' issues, and the vision is for teachers to have a better understanding of students' backgrounds.

Dr. Crossen-Powell distributed several fact sheets: 1) National Facts about Children in Foster care and 2) Findings on School Stability Provisions. She reviewed steps taken to implement school stability requirements and said that DSS can make arrangements, including transportation, to keep children in their home school. Dr. Crossen-Powell reviewed statistics and outcomes for children transitioning out of foster care. Studies show that without a lifelong connection to a caring adult, these older youth are often vulnerable to adverse situations:

National Data

54%	earned a high school diploma
2%	obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher
84%	became a parent
51%	were unemployed
30%	had no health insurance
25%	had been homeless
30%	were receiving public assistance

Foster care children can be covered by Medicaid until age 25; however, they must apply for benefits themselves after exiting the foster care system.

Rev. Shannon asked how a youth's history is shared with DSS. Dr. Crossen-Powell many of the children are from juvenile court, and DSS knows nothing about them or their educational history when they come into care. For the children DSS does know about, that information is shared with the placement, whether it is with foster parents or a group home. Ms. Hutto said she sees this presentation as more of an overview because DSS may not have a child's information or it may not be able to be presented to teachers in a public way. If teachers are aware of some of the issues a child could be dealing with, it will be helpful.

Mr. Walter said the Code of Virginia provides that if the child is in foster care, and they are going to a different school district, the receiving school district is directed to enroll the child, even before any of the paperwork comes through. It oftentimes creates the issue of the children being enrolled, but because the school does not know where to put them, the children are placed in a one-on-one classroom for the day or something similar. The second issue is that for IEP purposes, the foster parents are the parents to attend the meetings. Although sometimes Hanover DSS may have more information, they are not the ones invited as a requirement to those meetings. HDSS tries to make sure the foster parents know as much information as DSS has, but there is always the loss of a little data every time it goes from one to the other. This loss of information could be a major issue especially with children who had school issues in their prior placement. DSS may know what is going on in court that the foster parents may not know about. If an issue comes up in an IEP meeting, the child may be old enough to participate in some respects, but may not be able to communicate his/her needs. Mr. Walter suggested it might be worth investigating that during the schools' teacher convocation, that DSS might provide information for teachers or a list of contacts. In the high schools and most of the elementary schools, there are children involved either directly or indirectly with foster care. There are foster families with children who may not be in foster care, but the family has a foster child or

children in the home which may cause issues with their own child(ren). Increased communication serves everyone's benefit.

Ms. Dibble, a member of the School Board, said that typically, when a child is placed at one of the schools, the Social Services worker is involved in that process, and there should immediately be a direct link. During the 2013-14 school year, there were 24 children in Hanover County who were in foster care: 13 at the elementary level; 11 at the secondary level. At the elementary level, typically the principal and the school counselor are notified that a child is in a foster care scenario. They work with that child's teacher to make sure the child is provided for emotionally, is tested in their reading ability and that the teacher is definitely understanding what the needs are of that particular student. At the secondary level, the school counselor is the main liaison between the student and the school. The advocacy at that level is the school counselor who is in a collaborative effort with the Social Services worker. They work together to provide whatever that student needs to help them. Many times at the secondary level, the teachers are not notified that a child is in foster care, mostly because of the student's request. At that particular juncture, these children are typically looking to be normal, and they want to be perceived by everyone at the secondary level as being normal. At that level, the teachers do not know of the child's situation, but they are in contact, even on a daily basis, with those counselors who are working with them and providing for them emotionally. Because the counselor is in contact with Social Services, when anything comes up beyond what the school can handle, the school immediately reaches out to Social Services. The collaborative effort between the school employees and the Social Services Department is a good and positive one. Every case is different, but the schools definitely have a process that is followed and try to provide what the child needs on a day-to-day basis. Dr. Crossen-Powell said she has only heard positive input from the workers, particularly when they are having a meeting to determine the best interests of the child(ren), whether they need to stay in the same school or whether they need to move to another school. DSS has gone to some extreme lengths to have children transported long distances so they can finish the school year or graduate from the school they have been attending. DSS could not do this without the positive relationship with the school system.

Ms. Hutto asked if there were any comments and thanked everyone for their feedback on this presentation.

## **VIII. PERSONNEL UPDATE**

Dr. Crossen-Powell presented information on HDSS employee retention from 2003-2014:

- 99 people have left DSS employment
  - 42 resigned for other employment; 12 for other employment with resignation during their probationary period
  - 6 resigned during their probationary period at the agency's request due to performance issues
  - 7 resigned due to other performance issues
  - 4 employees left due to relocation

- 4 staff members have returned to Hanover DSS full-time employment; 2 employees who now work for the State have also worked with DSS on a part-time basis. The former Benefit Programs Supervisor is here today as part of the adoption assistance audit.
- In **2014**, two former employees returned to DSS; two people retired; one resigned after exhausting medical leave (including an additional 30-day grace period); three resigned for performance issues; four left for other employment.
- Retention rate was a bit lower in 2014 (81%) than in 2013 (91%) and 2012 (85%).

Ms. Dibble asked how the figures compared with state and national averages. Dr. Crossen-Powell said that social services agencies nationally have a huge turnover and it has always been a major issue. Rev. Shannon commented about the psychological impact the job has on the worker. Ms. Dibble thanked Dr. Crossen-Powell for her good leadership. Dr. Crossen-Powell said the agency has been able to work with Human Resources to remedy some of the performance issues for some people. With others, it was not a good fit for this department because of the nature of the job. It was either too stressful for some or not at all what they had anticipated. The agency has also worked with HR to offer competitive salaries and has hired some very good employees from other localities such as Chesterfield and Henrico. DSS used to lose employees to these localities and now they are coming here. Ms. Saunders commented that with salary, good working conditions and support, if there are two of those, you have a good chance of keeping people. Dr. Crossen-Powell said staff understands that if there are performance issues, management will deal with them.

## **IX. BUDGET UPDATE**

The fiscal year was just finished and 98% of the budget was spent on expenditures. The salary line was close due to leave payouts for people who left employment. \$170,000 was received from the State for cost allocation.

Ms. Althizer gave a demonstration of the “check-in system” used for clients to sign in electronically in the front lobby. A summary of the end-of-month reports (Ashland/Bell Creek combined) showed:

- Highest lobby traffic day: Monday
- Reason(s) for visit: Application drop off/pickup and drop off verifications/paperwork
- Time of day for most visits: 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- Average daily visits: Monday-339; Tuesday-296; Wednesday-327; Thursday-257; Friday-255

*(A scanned copy of the check-in system information was sent to Board members 7-23-14.)*

**X. HANOVER DSS SCORECARD**

*(revised copy sent to Board Members 7-22-14)*

Ms. Ferguson discussed each section of the Scorecard; however, not all State data was available. There were more intake cases (375-Medicaid/SNAP/TANF) in the Benefit Programs area than the previous month. Ongoing cases totaled 6,584 with 39 new cases previously unknown to DSS. VIEW participants employed three months or more - 86%. There were six untimely SNAP applications in May, and the manager has met with the workers who had errors. The Benefits unit is working on equalization of case loads. Medicaid reviews were above standard for the year and TANF applications were processed at 100% timely. Safety (CPS) outcomes and foster care visits were at 100%. DSS continues to work on foster care and congregate care placement numbers.

**XI. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

- The VOPEX radiological evacuation drill was held in June. FEMA requires that the North Anna nuclear plant have a full-scale radiological drill every six years. The first part was at Liberty Middle School where a mock sheltering exercise was done. CSB employees played the role of evacuees. The new Phoenix kits, also called "flyaway" kits, were used for the first time. This is a wristband with a bar code which is scanned and registered into the system. Whenever people come in or leave the shelter, the data is saved. The kits will be paid for with a grant. There are also bracelets with five bar codes so a family can be registered together. It was the first time the FEMA personnel had seen them used. Dr. Crossen-Powell commended the staff who volunteered for this drill as it was the first time for most of them. Two weeks later, a follow-up drill was held at the Emergency Operations Center which also went well. Dr. Crossen-Powell and Dr. Temoney staffed this exercise and Dr. Temoney had not experienced one before. FEMA found no flaws and Hanover passed with flying colors. Every two years, a mock drill must be held but without the entire run-through. It will hopefully be another six years before the full drill will need to be conducted again. Mr. Taylor added that it is important to practice these drills as it forms relationships with other departments. He also commended DSS staff for their efforts in these exercises and added that the evaluators said Hanover is the way it is supposed to be.
- Benefit Programs staff participated in civil rights and voter registration training.
- There was an incident during the week of July 10th where the life of a DSS staff member was threatened over the telephone by a customer. The Ashland Police and CSB were called and subsequently, the person was hospitalized for mental health issues. The CSB and Ashland police were very helpful in resolving the issue.
- The leadership team met with the Ashland Planner about issues the agency was seeing in the town. Topics included affordable housing, the pockets of poverty, lack of transportation and drug usage in certain areas.

- Interviews were held for the Customer Service Agent position. An employee on probation resigned due to health problems. She also needed surgery but had depleted all her leave which had been front-loaded when first employed. A candidate was selected and information sent to HR for hiring.
- There was another incident where a gentleman exposed himself in the lobby to a number of people including children. He was asked to stop; however, he ignored the request and the Ashland Police arrested him. He did receive his EBT card before he left. The man was wearing only shorts and a beach towel and had been transported to DSS by a Hanover Sheriff's deputy so he could talk with his BPS worker about a new EBT card. There is now signage in the lobby suggesting that people be appropriately attired in order to receive services. No one will be denied services, but customers do need to be dressed appropriately.
- An article was written about DSS by Ms. Huang and published in the Richmond Times-Dispatch on June 30th. If anyone has not seen it, a copy will be provided.
- Under a new State DSS program, a requirement of the federal government now, for every child who enters foster care, the case has to be audited the following month to determine if the agency has completed the IV-E eligibility determination. One case has been done and there will be at least three this month as three children came into care last week, a sibling group age five years and under. There is a strong possibility that two other children will come into care.
- Benefit Programs staff participated in a webinar, "Innovative Solutions for Better Long-Term Care".
- The CPS staff provided training on mandated reporters for the Health Department nurses and also to Parks and Recreation summer staff.
- Dr. Temoney attended the State Executive Council Retreat where she was appointed to the State and Local Advisory Team (SLAT) as the representative of the Virginia League of Social Services Executives (VLSSE). She also attended the Child Welfare Advisory Committee meeting and a meeting developing guidelines for extending foster care in Virginia for youth age 18-21. Dr. Crossen-Powell attended the VDSS Permanency Committee meeting in Charlottesville. There are a lot of changes coming to foster care during the next year.
- Ms. Daricka Jackson, Benefit Programs Manager, attended the State Department's Modernization Steering Committee meeting, and she was invited to sit on that committee.
- The adoption assistance audit is being conducted this week for four days. The IV-E audit will follow.

- The management team met with Sheree Hedrick of Hanover Safe Place to discuss some possible collaborations with DSS.
- The police were called again this morning for a belligerent gentleman in the lobby who would not leave when asked. He finally did leave, but pulled back into the parking lot, came back into the lobby and was very loud and argumentative. Rev. Shannon asked if there were any suggestions by the police in regard to security and safety in the lobby. Dr. Crossen-Powell said that a meeting is scheduled with the Ashland Police next Wednesday, July 30th, and this issue will be discussed. DSS staff know that it is perfectly acceptable to call 911 if they feel threatened or unsafe. Mr. Taylor said there is good security in the lobby with the receptionist behind glass and the doors being locked.
- Mr. Taylor asked to comment on the newspaper article. He said he appreciated the good article and pointed out that it spotlighted a Hanover family who was receiving food assistance at the food pantries. He expressed appreciation for these resources. The reporter also interviewed some DSS staff, and discussed the increase in caseloads and the fact that no new staff have been added. There was a comment from Ms. Ferguson that if additional resources were found to be needed, that the County would respond. Mr. Taylor thanked Ms. Huang for the article. Rev. Shannon said that several needs were addressed in the article and asked if there was a process in place for how to contribute to a specific family or families in need. Dr. Crossen-Powell said that would need to be discussed. Mr. Walter said there are privacy issues and while DSS can receive donations, it would be difficult for DSS to be a conduit to help private individuals. DSS is a resource for referral to other community partners (ACES, MCEF, WHEAT and others) for citizens seeking assistance. If there are groups or individuals who want to be a resource, they can advise DSS. Dr. Crossen-Powell said that DSS maintains current lists of community resources and referrals for specific needs are available at the front desk and switchboard.

## **XII. ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Hutto asked if there was any more information to be presented or any questions. There being none, the meeting was adjourned at 4:57 p.m. by Ms. Hutto.

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Robert Barnette, Vice Chair

*Next meeting: Tuesday, September 23, 2014; 3:30 p.m.*